

Investigation of Morteza Momayez's Illustrations in Epic of Gilgamesh Based on Julia Kristeva's Intertextuality Theory

Investigación de las ilustraciones de Morteza Momayez en la epopeya de Gilgamesh basada en la teoría de la intertextualidad de Julia Kristeva

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ABSTRACT

The issue of death and the desire for eternal life is found in the myths of the nations of the world. The myths of Mesopotamia are no exceptions. One of the Mesopotamian myths in which the sorrowful inevitability of death is reflected is the Epic of Gilgamesh. In this myth, Enkidu's unbelievable death represents the first thoughtful confrontation of a Mesopotamian man with the shocking reality of death, and Gilgamesh's failed attempt to attain immortality indicates that the ancient Sumerian man accepts the mortality of his kind as an integral part of his destiny and succumbs to it. In the meantime, Ahmad Shamloo's literary recreation of the epic of Gilgamesh has been studied with Morteza Momayez's illustration. In this paper, we try to examine the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh with illustrative representation of Master Momayez (Iranian artist) through an adaptive-analytical approach to Julia Kristeva's intertextuality theory, which is a new approach. The purpose of this study is to express Kristeva's view to show a new reading and explanation of the Mesopotamian epic with an explanation and illustration from an Iranian artist. In this regard, the text and its degree of adaptation to the images are examined using intertextual relations. The findings indicate that although these images are illustrated on the basis of Gilgamesh, the Iranian explanation and readability of Momayez can be visible in it.

Keywords: Gilgamesh, Morteza Momayez, Mesopotamia, Humbaba, Illustration

RESUMEN

El tema de la muerte y el deseo de vida eterna se encuentra en los mitos de las naciones del mundo. Los mitos de Mesopotamia no son excepciones. Uno de los mitos mesopotámicos en los que se refleja la triste inevitabilidad de la muerte es la epopeya de Gilgamesh. En este mito, la increíble muerte de Enkidu representa la primera confrontación reflexiva de un hombre mesopotámico con la impactante realidad de la muerte, y el intento fallido de Gilgamesh de alcanzar la inmortalidad indica que el antiguo hombre sumerio acepta la mortalidad de su especie como una parte integral de su destino y sucumbe a ello. Mientras tanto, la recreación literaria de Ahmad Shamloo de la epopeya de Gilgamesh ha sido estudiada con la ilustración de Morteza Momayez. En este artículo, tratamos de examinar la epopeya mesopotámica de Gilgamesh con una representación ilustrativa del maestro Momayez (artista iraní) a través de un enfoque adaptativo-analítico de la teoría de la intertextualidad de Julia Kristeva, que es un enfoque nuevo. El propósito de este estudio es expresar el punto de vista de Kristeva para mostrar una nueva lectura y explicación de la epopeya mesopotámica con una explicación e ilustración de un artista iraní. En este sentido, el texto y su grado de adaptación a las imágenes se examinan utilizando relaciones intertextuales. Los hallazgos indican que aunque estas imágenes se ilustran sobre la base de Gilgamesh, la explicación iraní y la legibilidad de Momayez pueden ser visibles en ella.

Palabras clave: Gilgamesh, Morteza Momayez, Mesopotamia, Humbaba, Ilustración.

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Recibido: 10/06/2019 Aceptado: 18/09/2019

Introduction

The epic of Gilgamesh is the story of the king of the land of Uruk; he is a very oppressive ruler who oppresses the people of his land. The people of Uruk complain to god of gods "Shamash", who rid them of Gilgamesh's oppression. As a punishment for him, Shamash sends a giant named Enkidu to confront him. But after a while, the two become friends. For entertainment, Gilgamesh takes Enkidu to the Cedar Forest to fight with "Humbaba" the guardian of the Cedar Forest. After he wins, he decapitates him and returns to the city triumphantly. The rest of the story has been recreated by an Iranian artist and poet "Ahmad Shamloo" and then Morteza Momayez, an Iranian artist, has made illustration for it (Barthes, 1977). This study examines the fourth and fifth tablets of epic of Gilgamesh, in which Gilgamesh and Enkidu fight with Humbaba and finally Humbaba is killed. And Morteza Momayez has painted three pictures for this event (Shamloo, 2010). In the twentieth century, theorists in the field of literature and linguistics have been able to present different and varied theories, one of them is Julia Kristeva. Kristeva came up with a great discovery in the field of literature and art by inventing the theory of intertextuality. According to Kristeva, "intertextuality is mainly a way of recording history in us; us two people, two destinies, two souls. Intertextuality is a way of entering history in its structuralism and its lonely and orphan texts and interpretations" (Kristeva, 1980). Intertextuality was based on this simple sentence that "every text is made on the basis of previous texts" (Namvar, 2008). In this study, while trying to explain Kristeva's intertextuality theory, we try to analyze and evaluate Momayez's illustrations by relying on this theory (Mumayyiz, 2005).

Research methodology

This research is primarily an attempt to make a (content-intertextual) comparison of images created from Gilgamesh's narrative, especially the scene of Humbaba's appearing that "as an intra-cultural study body, which was limited to the study of the three works of Morteza Momayez due to the extensiveness of the subject" which is associated with fourth and fifth tablets of the epic of Gilgamesh. Shamloo and are analyzed according to Julia Kristeva's intertextual theories and approaches (Shamloo). The research methodology used in this research is (content analysis) that is to potentially identify the data as symbolic phenomena, and to analyze the selected images without interrupting them and therefore it tries on how Master Momayez utilized the previous illustrated texts, myths, folklore stories and at the same time to use the artist's imagination in an attempt to achieve this goal. This entails examining various factors in the field of intertextuality in the illustrator's understanding of Gilgamesh's narrative and its representation in his works.

Research background

Research in the field of recognizing the Mesopotamian myths, and in particular the Gilgamesh myth, is an important part of Orientalism knowledge. Orientalists have authored and published numerous books and articles to explore the various aspects of the historical and cultural life of the nations in the East. (Pritchard et al, 2011) compiled Oriental texts including mythological, legal, social texts and ...of Mesopotamia. The book includes the first translation of the tablets obtained from Mesopotamia and there is no interference and possession in it. In this book, he describes Gilgamesh story. In this book, he describes Gilgamesh's story. Allen describes the theory of intertextuality and proves that texts are created by affecting one another with an emphasis on intertextual relations (Allen, 2011). Fakhari Zadeh had a conversation with a group of Iranian cultural and literary figures, including Morteza Momayez, in which he has garnered Momayez's comments and point of view on Iranian art (Fakharizadeh, 2015). On the other hand, George Smith first translated the tablets from Cuneiform into English, and then Monshizadeh translated them into Persian. In this book, while describing the history of this legend, the story of Gilgamesh and the tablets remained from it are described. Mourizinejad describes contemporary Iranian illustrators and the type of styles and methods used in their works. Among these illustrators, works of Momayez have also been examined. Kristeva, describes the intertextuality approach in the field of criticism of art and literature. Intertextuality is a new and very applicable theory according to which every text has a pre-text that is also influenced by it (Kristeva, 1986).

Many other works are listed in the references. It seems, however, that there is no work among the researches done in the field of illustrations by Master Momayez for the epic of Gilgamesh, which specifically belongs to the study of these three images based on Kristeva's theory.




		
Humbaba's being decapitated	Humbaba being killed by Gilgamesh and Enkidu	Humbaba's appearing

Table 1- Three stages of a) Humbaba's appearing b) being killed c) being decapitated by Gilgamesh and Enkidu (Quinn, 2013)

Theoretical approach

Intertextuality is one of the theories of the twentieth century, which provides new insights from the relation of elements in texts and deals with intertextual relations. In the twentieth century, Julia Kristeva, the Bulgarian immigrant lady in French territory, coined the words and terms for this new theory and introduced a new approach to scholars and critics of the arts and literature. Kristeva believes that every text is created on the basis of its previous texts. There is no text that is completely produced or even received independently. Therefore, pre-texts always play a fundamental role in producing and receiving a text. In other words, without intertextual relations no text can be created; according to intertextual theorists, there are two main theories about the sources and references of texts: first the group that consider one text to be made of other texts and that the search for their sources to be useless. Second, those who are determined to find traces and elements of other texts in the new text. Kristeva's intertextuality is in the first group and is not as a way of observing elements derived from other texts, but rather is used for new explaining and reading of texts (Jenaabadi, 2013).

An important feature of Kristeva's intertextuality is "contrasting it with criticism of resources"¹. Kristeva did not agree with the decoding of the text and considered it very difficult and even impossible. In this study, we have attempted to analyze the illustrations and reading of Master Momayez for Gilgamesh myth through Kristeva's intertextuality approach (Kristeva, 1986).

Gilgamesh myth

Gilgamesh is a Mesopotamian myth, Mesopotamia is a plain, almost flat land in western Asia that today corresponds to the current state of Iraq, Iran's neighbor. The land, as its name implies, lies between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Gilgamesh is one of the oldest and most famous epic narratives in the world. This epic is originally a Sumerian myth that has a Babylonian narrative and contains six separate stories. The most complete available Babylonian text of this narrative has been obtained on the Twelve Tablets discovered from the library of Ashurbanipal (the Assyrian king) in Ninawa. Date of writing the Babylon text of this poem is attributed to the early seals of the second millennium BC [13]. These tablets tell the story of the life of the mythical hero Gilgamesh, one of the oldest kings of Uruk, who goes through many events on the path to achieve immortality and solve the mystery of death and eventually succumbs to the sorrowful inevitability of death [13-15,29].

In Iran for the epic of Gilgamesh, illustrations have been made by Master Morteza Momayez, for the recreated text of Iranian poet and writer Ahmad Shamloo. Because of the extensiveness of the subject, this study is limited to only three images of the work, related to Humbaba the demon and guardian of the Cedar Forest. The illustrations in Table 1 illustrate the three stages of Humbaba's appearing, killing, and ultimately his decapitation by Gilgamesh and Enkidu.

Morteza Momayez and illustrations

Morteza Momayez is known as the father of Iranian graphic art. Master Momayez's interest in Iranian ancient art motifs and ancient Iranian traditions is evident in the works and motifs existing in his illustrations. Momayez has designed images of the epic of Gilgamesh in black and white, which is an expression of archaism and reminiscent of the aforementioned motifs. As stated in Kristeva's theory of intertextuality: Texts are never created all at once and other texts are always involved in the creation of new texts. In this regard, the presence of pre-text in the new text

can be seen [5]. According to this theory, the art of Momayez can be analyzed, the motifs, symbols and signs used by Momayez in his illustrations were not created by him all at once, but rather while Momayez has progressed by studying the epic of Gilgamesh and Mesopotamian myths, Momayez's pre-text, which is derived from ancient Iranian art and culture, has manifested in the illustrations. In illustration of Humbaba in the text it has been mentioned that his body is covered with scales; in this image (Figure 1) we can see that Momayez has tried to remain faithful to Mesopotamian text and culture, but at the same time, the Humbaba's image reminds us of Div (demon) in Iranian folklore (Gale, 2015).

It should be borne in mind here that Momayez tries to visualize the work in a way that it vivifies the atmosphere of that time to the audience. Therefore, it should be noted that while Momayez studying the myth of Gilgamesh and Mesopotamia, his power of imagination that is influenced by Iranian myth, culture, folklore and legends should be taken into account (Motlagh, 2015).

Intertextuality for Kristeva is not a way of observing elements derived from other texts, rather it is used for a new explanation of the new status of the text, it can be shown that in the illustrations of Master Momayez he has illustrated a Sumerian myth with a new explanation and reading of the Mesopotamian epic. In other words, he has mythologized for his pre-text and has altered the pre-text content (Gale, 2015).

And on the other hand, the characterization, display of the characters, the face, the legs, are all influenced by Morteza Momayez's pre-text of art and images remained from ancient Iran. A head that is displayed in profile while the body and eyes are shown from the front. Also the style of the face and hair of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, which is reminiscent of the Achaemenid art and the figure of the eternal soldiers depicted in the Palace of Darius in Susa (Tables 1, 2 and 3). As we said, we are not looking for decoding of the images as it is very difficult and even impossible to present such works perfectly. In addition to the intertextual relations in the formal and stylistic structure of the work, Momayez quotes: "The use of traditional motifs and bas-reliefs was created at a particular time when we used European experiences. That is, we found that European designers, in fact, also have an indirect view and attention to their own history and culture, and that is why they have acquired identity. That was when the issue of identity was raised for us young people of that time, and we necessarily referred to our cultural heritage, which is a long story.

In explaining the causes of these differences based on the theory of intertextuality and examining the pre-texts that Momayez had in his mind based on ancient Iranian art, he explored the hidden structures and relationships between texts and considered the sociocultural factors and extrinsic-component factors (Gale, 2015).

In another conversation, Momayez expresses his identity: "We are always Iranian and we will be because we have a special heritage. But our heritage, of course, is also affected by time and the world and becomes our present identity. So we need to know how to use our heritage with current condition of the time in a forethoughtful and proper way [20]. As can be seen in the creation of the image (2 and 3), Momayez has gotten himself close to the thinking and insight of ancient Iran, especially the Achaemenids, and has made it his pre-text and created the illustration. His personal style has been the use of narrative and black and white lines, not using much colors in illustration to make his expression and more emphasizing the space of work and design. His technique in illustration is to create thin linear scratches on surfaces impregnated with black ink, being simple yet highly powerful. In this work he has used the scratchboard technique; and by using the features of this technique, such as contrast, line interference and texture obtained by composite scraping, he has tried to show the anxiety indicating the event (Ai, 2016).

He has also been effective in expressing his views and making culture and introducing the art of particular periods, and in some ways have manifested and accelerated part of the visual tradition and memory of the ancients in his new work by making changes in his own personal way. Thus, based on studies, it seems that every text preserves the ancestors' tradition and cultural heritage and that the texts are part of interconnected chains whose authors, preserving the contemporary atmosphere, preserve and display the impact of earlier texts in their work (Davodi, 2017).

And it should be borne in mind that we are not seeking to decode and adapt these motifs and symbols used in Momayez's illustrations because, according to Kristeva's theory, searching in these symbols does not seem possible due to the vastness of a nation's cultural history. And it should be borne in mind that many of the motifs in the illustrations are derived from the hidden layers of the artist's mind that are intermingled with his graphic view angle in his illustrations. Morteza Momayez is an Oriental man who has been overwhelmed with the Middle East's world. Momayez also studied other Mesopotamian myths to illustrate this book while studying the epic of Gilgamesh; however, it should be noted that Iran and Mesopotamia were neighbors and had a great influence on each other. Momayez's reading cannot be so far from the original work. He has created a contemporary work considering his pre-texts of the past, influenced by Mesopotamia, Iran, and so on (Motlagh, 2015).

Conclusion

After explaining Julia Kristeva's theory and adapting to the narrative of Gilgamesh in this model, we found that our hypothesis regarding adaptation of the narrative of Gilgamesh to the aforementioned method is verifiable and then by examining its illustrated representation in two different cultures based on the data obtained, we came to the conclusion that despite the similar text and the fundamental and common characteristics of the hero, there are differences and distinctions in the images that we used the intertextuality method to discover the causes of these differences in the images. Studying and examining the images based on intertextual relations, illustrations of "Morteza Momayez" Iranian artist remind us of bas-reliefs of Achaemenid, Assyrians, legends, myths and folklores of Iran. The artist seeks to recreate a space that relates to the ancestors. As it has been studied, with a scrupulous and accurate view, he has approached the ancient Iranian thought, got inspired by the style of mythology and illustration of that period, and has sought to preserve ancient Iranian art and make it applicable in today's society. In other words, he has revived the art and style of mythology of that time by transiting from the present to the past. In fact, Momayez has transformed the content of the pre-text with his own thought and created an independent and contemporary work, the product of his own mind, showing a part of the cultural and artistic background of that time, which was mentioned in this essay.

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